

Message Text

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73

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SR-02 ORM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 HUD-02 AID-20 TRSE-00

HEW-08 SCA-01 DRC-01 /167 W
----- 103795

R 311409Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2603

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2959

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, US, IS

SUBJ: PROBLEMS OF SOVIET IMMIGRANTS

REF: MOSCOW 8099

1. SUMMARY. LEVEL OF DISCONTENT AMONG NEW SOVIET IMMIGRANTS UNDOUBTEDLY ON THE RISE DUE TO INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS. ACCORDING TO ABSORPTION MINISTRY OFFICIAL, FEEDBACK OF THIS DISCONTENT TO SOVIET UNION PROBABLY AFFECTS RATE OF DROP-OUT IN VIENNA RATHER THAN NUMBERS OF JEWS SEEKING TO LEAVE SOVIET UNION. NO EARLY SOLUTION TO HOUSING OR EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS IN SIGHT, ALTHOUGH PROSPECTIVE ELECTION OF FINANCE MINISTER SAPIR AS HEAD OF JEWISH AGENCY MAY RESULT IN HIGHER PRIORITIES FOR EASING PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. ABSORPTION MINISTRY OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF PLANNING, SHMUEL ADLER, TOLD EMBOFF MAY 29 THAT SOVIET IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING DURING PAST HALF YEAR HAVE INDEED HAD EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TIME SETTLING IN ISRAEL.

3. HOUSING IS MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM. WIDE RANGE OF REASONS

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CONTRIBUTE TO HOUSING SHORTAGE, INCLUDING POOR INTER-GOVERNMENTAL

COORDINATION, INADEQUATE FUNDING, SHORTAGE OF LABOR AND MATERIALS, HEAVY DEMAND FOR HOUSING AMONG NON-IMMIGRANT SECTORS OF POPULATION, ETC. ABSORPTION MINISTRY HAS USED RENTED APARTMENTS DURING PAST YEAR AS TEMPORARY SOLUTION UNTIL NEW PERMANENT HOUSING IS AVAILABLE. THIS HAS CAUSED PROBLEMS LATER, WHEN IMMIGRANTS ARE ASKED TO MOVE.

RENTED HOUSING IS USUALLY MORE CENTRALLY LOCATED THAN NEW HOUSING WHICH IS GENERALLY CONSTRUCTED IN OUTLYING REGIONS WHERE SOVIET IMMIGRANTS RELUCTANT TO SETTLE, AND OFTEN LOCATED FAR FROM PLACES

OF EMPLOYMENT. ALSO, IN PAST MONTHS, MANY IMMIGRANTS HAVE HAD TO STAY WITH RELATIVES OR BE ACCOMMODATED IN TEMPORARY ABSORPTION FACILITIES FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME. ADLER ESTIMATED THAT ROUGHLY 10,000 NEW APARTMENTS ARE NEEDED TO RESOLVE HOUSING PROBLEM FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS. DROP IN IMMIGRANTS FROM SOVIET UNION OVER PAST MONTHS HAS PROVIDED SOME RELIEF TO CRITICAL HOUSING PROBLEM, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY WORSE HAD IMMIGRATION CONTINUED AT 1973 LEVELS.

4. EMPLOYMENT ALSO BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT, PARTICULARLY FOR ROUGHLY 40 PERCENT OF SOVIET IMMIGRANTS ENTERING LABOR FORCE WITH SKILLS NOT NEEDED IN ISRAELI LABOR MARKET, SUCH AS LAWYERS, JOURNALISTS, AND OTHER WITH BACKGROUNDS IN HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES, ART, ETC. EVEN LABOR MARKET FOR DOCTORS HAS BECOME SATURATED, ADLER NOTED. THERE ARE CURRENTLY SOME 2,500 SOVIET IMMIGRANTS WITHOUT JOBS. FOR MANY SOVIET IMMIGRANTS, ADJUSTMENTS TO NEW PROFESSIONS AND TO NEW CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS, AGGRAVATED BY LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES.

5. ADLER, AS DO ALL ISRAELI OFFICIALS, REMAINS CONVINCED THAT DROP IN EMIGRATION OF JEWS FROM SOVIET UNION OVER PAST FIVE MONTHS DUE MAINLY IF NOT EXCLUSIVELY TO SOVIET POLICY. FEEDBACK OF DISCONTENT, HE BELIEVED, DOES HAVE IMPACT ON DROP-OUT RATE IN VIENNA, TOGETHER WITH REPORTS OF FAVORABLE CONDITIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES--MAINLY US. DROP-OUT RATE--I.E. EMIGRATING SOVIET JEWS WHO DO NOT PROCEED TO ISRAEL-- LAST YEAR WAS AROUND FIVE PERCENT, MOST OF IT OCCURRING IN LATTER PART OF YEAR. DROP-OT RATE HAS GRADUALLY INCREASED AND ACCORDING TO ADLER, IS NOW ABOUT 15 PERCENT. HE FEARS IT MAY SOON INCREASE TO 20 PERCENT. HE NOTED THAT SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF REMAINING JEW IN SOVIET UNION WHO WANT

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TO EMIGRATE ARE MOTIVATED MORE BY DESIRE TO LEAVE RATHER THAN TO SETTLE

IN ISRAEL FOR ZIONIST OR RELIGIOUS REASONS.

6. TO EASE HOUSING PROBLEM, ISRAELI GOVT IS PLANNING TO IMPORT 1000 PRE-FAB HOUSING UNITS FROM YUGOSLAVIA, COMPLETE WITH MATERIAL, EQUIPMENT, AND MEN TO ERECT UNITS. ADLER SEES ADDITIONAL IMPORT OF PRE-FABS AS SOLUTION TO HOUSING PROBLEM,

TOGETHER WITH INCREASED USE OF RENTAL HOUSING, AND CONCERTED EFFORT TO SPEED UP CONSTRUCTION METHODS IN ISRAEL. IMPORTED HOUSING HAS ADVANTAGE OF NOT CONTRIBUTING TO ISRAELI INFLATION AS IT DOES NOT COMPETE FOR MANPOWER AND MATERIAL ALREADY IN SHORT SUPPLY. IT DOES HOWEVER PRESENT DRAIN ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE, AND HERE, ADLER NOTED, IS IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED US DOLLAR AID FOR SETTling SOVIET IMMIGRANTS.

7. CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS IN EMPLOYMENT FIELD ARE MADE BY USE OF RETRAINING, WAGE SUPPLEMENTS, AND SUBSTANTIAL LOANS TO ANYONE WHO WILL DEVELOP PROJECTS CREATING JOBS FOR SOVIET IMMIGRANTS. WHILE SOVIET IMMIGRANTS HAVE VALUABLE POTENTIAL TO AUGMENT ISRAEL'S CURRENT LABOR SHORTAGE, KEY DIFFICULTY IS WITH PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF MANY SOVIET IMMIGRANTS FOR WHICH LIMITED OR NO DEMAND EXISTS IN ISRAEL.

8. CHARGE BY TASS, REPORTED IN ISRAELI PRESS MAY 28, THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT PERMIT DISILLUSIONED SOVIET IMMIGRANTS TO LEAVE COUNTRY OF COURSE IS NOT CORRECT. ACTING HEAD OF JEWISH AGENCY, ARIE DULZIN, RECENTLY TOLD PRESS THAT OF 85,000 SOVIET IMMIGRANTS IN PAST THREE YEARS, ONLY 1/200 LEFT ISRAELI (1.5 PERCENT), WHILE ANOTHER 3,400 REMAINED IN VIENNA. WHILE DATA ARE LACKING ON RATE OF SOVIET EMIGRATION FROM ISRAEL DURING 1974 OR NUMBER DESIRING TO LEAVE IF THEY COULD LOCATE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, WE BELIEVE IT MAY BE RISING. ONLY OFFICIAL OBSTACLE PLACED IN WAY OF SOVIETS DESIRING TO LEAVE ISRAEL IS REQUIREMENT TO REPAY OUTSTANDING LOANS, MAINLY FOR APARTMENTS, WHICH ARE RETURNED TO PAY OFF MORTGAGE, GRANTS FOR TRAINING, ETC ARE NOT REPAYABLE. AFTER ONE YEAR, SOVIET IMMIGRANTS, AS ISRAELI CITIZENS, ARE ELIGIBLE FOR PASSPORTS. THOSE DESIRING TO LEAVE PRIOR TO ELIGIBILITY TO RECEIVE PASSPORT ARE ISSUED LAISSEZ-PASSERS.

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9. ON OUTFLOW OF SOVIET IMMIGRANTS, DULZIN EXPLAINED THAT THERE ARE PROBLEMS OF MIXED MARRIAGES, PREFERENCE TO JOIN RELATIVES IN US, AND DESIRE TO GET RICH QUICK. FURTHER PUBLICITY ABOUT POOR HOUSING SITUATION, HE CONCEDED, COULD HURT IMMIGRATION FROM SOVIET UNION, BUT IF SOVIET GOVT WOULD EASE GRANTING OF EXIT PERMITS, HE BELIEVED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS WOULD STILL COME. DULZIN PREDICTED THERE WOULD BE HALF MILLION SOVIET JEWS IN ISRAEL BY END OF DECADE (A NUMBER INSPIRED MORE BY HOPE THAN REALISTIC ASSESSMENT, WE FEEL).

10. COMMENT: PROBLEM OF UNHAPPY SOVIET IMMIGRANTS UNLIKELY TO DISAPPEAR SOON, WITH CONSEQUENT INCREASE IN NUMBER OF SOVIET IMMIGRANTS FROM SOVIET UNION OPTING IN VIENNA TO GO TO US AND INCREASE IN SOVIET IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL SEEKING RESIDENCE ELSEWHERE, MAINLY US. PROSPECTIVE ELECTION IN

MID-JUNE OF FINANCE MINISTER SAPIR AS HEAD OF JEWISH AGENCY
COULD BRING TO BEAR HIS ENERGETIC TALENTS IN MARSHALING RESOURCES
AND INSTILLING HIGHER SENSE OF PRIORITIES IN ALLEVIATING PROBLEMS
OR IMMIGRANTS IN ORDER TO FACILITATE MASSIVE INGATHERING OF SOVIET
AND OTHER JEWS FROM ABROAD.
VELIOTES

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